GIOSUE CARDUCCI

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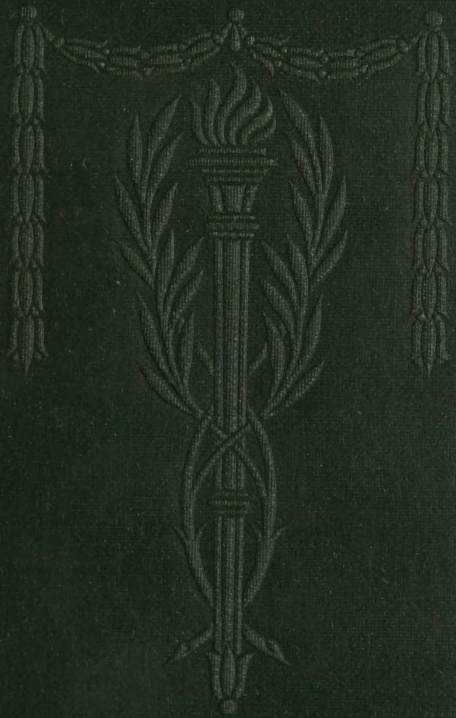

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BY

ORLO WILLIAMS

LONDON: CONSTABLE AND COMPANY LTD
BOSTON & NEW YORK: HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
1914

I WISH to acknowledge the kindness of the two firms of Nicola Zanichelli, Bologna, and G. Barbèra, Florence, in giving me permission to make such quotations as I wished. From the former come the complete edition of Carducci's works and his letters; from the latter the valuable memoir by G. Chiarini. The full titles of all books to which I have referred will be found in the Bibliography.

GIOSUE CARDUCCI

I

THE birthplace of Giosue Carducci was Valdicastello, a little village of the Versilia, that part of the Tuscan coast lying beneath the Apuan Alps and the quarries of Carrara which inspired many of the most beautiful poems in the third book of D'Annunzio's *Laudi*. He was born on July 27, 1835, but the only impression that he preserved of this part of Tuscany was the " sad accent of the Versilia " sounding the fairy stories of his grandmother, who accompanied the family when they moved in 1838 further south to Bolgheri in the more dreary and less healthy Tuscan Maremma. Carducci's father, the doctor Michele Carducci, son of a small landed proprietor in the Versilia, who had died after dissipating all his property, was an

unstable, hot-headed man whose republican sympathies had already won him exile and imprisonment. He left the Versilia, where he had been doctor to a mining company, to take the post of municipal doctor at Bolgheri at a small salary. His second son, Dante, had been already born to him, and the third, Valfredo, made his appearance in 1841. The Carducci family remained in the Maremma, either at Bolgheri or Castagneto, for eleven years, and this rather mournful country,

> dove raro ombreggia il bosco
> le maligne crete, e al pian
> di rei sugheri irto e fósco
> i cavalli errando van,[1]

where bloomed, in the poet's words, his "triste primavera," was the native land to which in after years he turned the wistful eye of memory, when he wrote the sonnet *Traversando la Maremma Toscana*, the *Idillio Maremmano* and the beautiful *Davanti San Guido*. Moreover, though most of his life was spent in Bologna,

[1] "Where verdure sparsely shades the unkindly chalk-hills, and the horses go wandering down to the plain, dark and bristling with ugly cork trees."

Carducci always prided himself on his Tuscan origin which allowed him to share from childhood the purity of Tuscan speech and to feel a link with Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, the three great poets of Florence. So long as the family remained in the Maremma Carducci had no teacher but his father, whose instruction was spasmodic and unsympathetic, yet the doctor was wise enough to allow his son free access to his library, a small collection of literary and historical books including the the works of Manzoni, of whom the doctor was an ardent admirer. In an amusing page of reminiscence[1] Carducci has recorded his youthful studies and diversions : how he read and re-read *I Promessi Sposi*, the Iliad, the Æneid and the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, besides Rollin's *History of Rome* and Thiers' *History of the French Revolution*, and how he and his playfellows, fervent republicans all, organized make-believe republics on classical models and fought rough battles in defence of them.

" Our republics were made up of tumultuous assemblies and battles with sticks and stones,

[1] *Alcuni Giudizi su A. Manzoni.*

with which we meant to reproduce the fairest deeds of the good old times of Rome and of the French Revolution. In these representations, moreover, respect for history was certainly not pushed to those pedantic excesses which are wont to spoil or to cool the warmth of dramatic effect. What a splendid stoning I gave Cæsar one day as he was about to pass the Rubicon! For that day the tyrant had to take refuge somewhere or other with his legions, and the republic was safe. But next day Cæsar caught me in a thicket, asserting that he was Opimius and this was the grove of the Furies: in vain I protested against the anacronism and claimed my attributes as Scipio Æmilianus: he had me taken into the midst of his Cretans and beaten like some Gracchus, while I asked that he should at least respect history by leaving me free to have myself killed by my slave. How they banged and laughed, those Cretans! But I avenged myself soon after, and historically, when, after capturing a coach-house that stood for the Tuileries, I chose to let the popular fury have free rein against the hired Swiss Guards of Louis XVI."

When his father heard of these fights, instead of sympathizing with his son's

honourable wounds, he kept him in to read Manzoni's *Morale Cattolica* and certain other improving books, which bred in him a "catilinarian" hatred for that rather sentimental morality which he called Manzonianism.

In 1849 the peace of the Carducci family was shattered by the stirring political events consequent upon Mazzini's entry into Rome. Doctor Michele, after inciting the peasants to rise by fiery speeches, was forced to fly from the authorities, and, after some adventures, found it more prudent to bring his family to Florence, where he was less likely to be marked. Giosue was sent to the Scuole Pie, where he became a prize pupil and a model of industry : not only did he follow the regular course so well that he passed brilliant final examinations in 1852, but in private he devoured Schiller, Leopardi, Foscolo, translations of Scott and Byron and many French authors. According to one of his schoolfellows, these were days of Spartan self-denial borne with the greatest dignity and courage. There is no doubt that to these early struggles, supported with such determina-

tion, were due the poet's independence and strength of character, but it is also to be feared that they accentuated that harshness of temper which was his chief failing both in social intercourse and in literary controversy, for he was always rebellious in suffering, regarding resignation as a contemptible quality.

The doctor had moved meanwhile to Celle, just outside Florence, where Giosue regularly spent his holidays and became engaged to his cousin Elvira Menicucci. He had already begun to write verses, and it was to poetry that he owed his first worldly success. A poem on the crusades, read at a literary society, having pleased the rector of the Scuola Normale at Pisa, Carducci was urged to compete for admission to this school, which was attached to the University and gave free board and instruction to chosen young men who intended to become teachers. From 1853 to 1856 Carducci completed his education at Pisa, taking his teacher's diploma and his degree with the utmost brilliancy. Though he much disliked the religious atmosphere and irritating supervision of

the Scuola Normale, though he worked with the same furious application and still suffered from fits of temper which made him dangerous to approach, these years at Pisa were happy for him as his first escape from the narrowness of family circumstances. He made several firm friendships, joined with companions in light-hearted excursions and gained some celebrity among them as a poet: and though he could write to his friend Chiarini of his

"infelicità somma di non avere né modo per trarre innanzi la vita o gloriosa o ingloriosa che sia, né speranze, né piaceri, o né pur rassegnazione,"[1]

he was, as a matter of fact, already earning small sums by writing in the *Letture di Famiglia* edited by Pietro Thouar and compiling a popular anthology of poetry.

Carducci had not long to wait for a post, for in the winter of 1856 his good testimonials won him an appointment as master in the *Lycée* of San Miniato at Tedesco, where he stayed till the summer of 1857.

[1] "Supreme unhappiness at having no means of continuing life, either with renown or without it, no hopes, no pleasures, and not even resignation."

These were the first days of joyous emancipation of which in the prose essay *Le Risorse di San Miniato al Tedesco* he has given such a delightful account. He and other young colleagues lived at a small inn, which as the "casa dei magistri" became the talk of the countryside for its noisy gaieties frequently shared by friends from Florence. Carducci ate and drank his fill with the others, without recking of the expense, he forgot his *fiancée* for a while in a love affair which came to nothing, and joined in a wit-combat against the critics of Florence who had praised the poems of one Bracci, contributing several satirical *sonetti codati* to a pamphlet called *Giunta alla Derrata*, which was a joint production of several young men who called themselves the *amici pedanti* and were enthusiastic champions of the classical style in poetry.

Towards the end of the academical year, however, the good innkeeper began to look anxious, and his anxiety extended to the young schoolmasters whose salaries were entirely disproportionate to the size of the impending bill. According to the poet's own account, the company hit on the

expedient of publishing Carducci's poems to make up the deficiency. This is not an entirely serious story, seeing that only three hundred copies were printed, but, at all events, Carducci's first volume of poems, entitled *Rime*, appeared in May, 1857. In August he left San Miniato never to return, with a reputation for impiety and liberalism which prevented the ratification of his new appointment to the municipal gymnasium of Arezzo. The withholding of the Government's approval was mainly due to the intrigues of one Pietro Fanfani, a Florentine man of letters with whom Carducci had many a sharp passage of arms, both before and after the publication of the *Rime*, which Fanfani criticized with great unfairness.

Carducci was now thrown upon his own resources, and, leaving his family at Santa Maria in Monte, he went to earn his living in Florence by giving lessons and writing. In November a great tragedy befell the family in the suicide of his brother Dante, whom he regarded with great affection and to whose memory he dedicated a *canzone* and three sonnets. The doctor Michele

never recovered from this blow, but took to his bed and died in the following year, leaving his wife and younger son practically destitute. With the aid of a small subsidy from the municipality Carducci removed his mother and brother to Florence, where he lodged with them in a garret and struggled to support them. The brief effervescence of youthful *insouciance* was over, and he was face to face with the bitter problems of existence. But the evening meetings of the *amici pedanti* over a glass of punch helped to sweeten his days, and he was enabled to turn his scholarship and industry to account by his connection with the publisher Barbèra, for whose "Edizione Diamante," during the next ten years, he edited many of the lesser Italian classics. The pay was small, but the work, besides providing a definite outlet for his energy, enabled him to acquire that immense erudition and literary power which made him one of the greatest critics of his day and to leave the mark of his devotion and insight, to use the words of Professor Croce, upon every branch of Italian literary history. His texts and

notes were prepared with the most accurate scholarship, while the prefaces, especially those to the *Lorenzo de' Medici*, *Salvator Rosa* and the Italian poems of Politian, have all those qualities of liveliness in presentation and eloquence in exposition which distinguish his finest prose. The edition of Politian's poems, in particular, which appeared in 1863, was a splendid achievement for a man of twenty-eight; it was nobly followed by the studies on Parini (1892) and the commentary on Petrarch completed with his pupil, Severino Ferrari (1899), and the other essays of erudition that are contained in his voluminous works.

II

In 1859 broke out the war against Austria which, if its end was not so glorious as its early victories, made certain the ultimate unity of Italy. Carducci was reproached in after years for not having volunteered to serve his country, and in his public defence he gave as his reason for not joining the colours the fact that two women were entirely dependent upon him. One of these was his mother and the other was his wife, Elvira Menicucci, whom he had married, after nine years' engagement, in March, 1859. It is not, indeed, quite clear why, in view of the inevitability of the war, Carducci should have assumed the additional burden at that precise moment. Neither the letters nor Chiarini's memoir throw any light upon the event, and in the absence of information judgment must be suspended, though it is certainly unfortunate that this patriot of patriots, whose

early verses breathe a fierce longing for action on Italy's behalf, should have been unable, when the time came, to fight for the cause which he held so dear. As it was, he had to redouble his energies as bread-winner, while his wife and mother earned a little by stitching uniforms for the soldiers. In this year he produced three works for the "Edizione Diamante," besides earning what he could by giving private lessons.

Nevertheless, if household cares forbade him to carry arms, they did not stifle the patriotism of his Muse. The proud words of Victor Emmanuel at the opening of the Parliament in Turin inspired him to write the *Canzone a Vittorio Emanuele*, which was published in a literary journal, *Il Poliziano*, started by Carducci, Chiarini and other friends. He followed this up by sonnets on the victories of the Piedmontese arms and the ode *Alla Croce di Savoia*, which had a great popular success, for it was sown broadcast about the streets of Bologna, set to music and sung in the theatre amid intense enthusiasm. In this respect Carducci was subsequently made

the object of a false charge, that of hiring out his poetic gifts to the authorities to stimulate public opinion. This was entirely untrue. With great difficulty a friend was able to persuade Carducci, after the success of *Alla Croce di Savoia*, to meet the minister Salvagnoli, who was a man of letters. Salvagnoli inquired why the poet had never asked the Government for a post : the reply was that he disliked asking. Shortly afterwards he was offered a professorship of Greek in the *Lycée* of Pistoia. This post he accepted and held for a few months in 1860 ; but later in the year Mamiani, who had become Minister of Education at Turin, offered him the chair of literature in the University of Bologna. He went thither in November, 1860, and remained professor till his retirement in 1904.

The professorship, at first but poorly paid, did not free him from the necessity of earning money from publishers, while it added the labour of preparing a course of lectures, no small one to so conscientious a scholar. Yet throughout his life Carducci, who had a very robust constitution, was able to perform a prodigious amount of

intellectual work entirely outside his poetry. To the lectures delivered during the first ten years of his professorship we owe two of his finest pieces of literary prose, the five discourses *Dello Svolgimento della Letteratura Nazionale* and *La Varia Fortuna di Dante.* The first of these works is an indispensable commentary on the conception of Italian history, literary and social, which appears in his greatest poems. In it Carducci traces the development of Italian literature and the influences affecting it from the earliest days to the Renaissance, seizing the outlines of each period with the unerring eye of an artist, and illustrating the developments in passages of magnificent imagery which, for the splendour of their poetic vision, are only comparable to the finest of the *Odi Barbare.* His concern in these studies is not purely critical or æsthetic : throughout he is inspired by the glorious memory of Italy's past, when she truly united temporal power with artistic achievement, like Athens in the Periclean age. He is the artist and the sage in one. With the idea of illustrating a definite moment of

artistic development, he paints a picture that has its own intrinsic æsthetic value ; but this æsthetic value brings up in its turn the historic or moral value of the thing represented, considered always from the standpoint of an Italian patriot. With all his bravely pagan appreciation of that plastic beauty which he so proudly opposes to mere sentimentalism or religious asceticism, Carducci does not regard the past as a flowery field for merely æsthetic promenades. D'Annunzio, like Victor Hugo and Théophile Gautier, sees in the Middle Ages only a riot of colour, an orgy of vigorous temperament ; he is concerned with nothing but the jewels and gay silks, the gigantic meals, the gorgeous drinking bouts, the clash of arms, the zest of life, the rich frequency of violent death. Carducci, through all the outward show, ever contemplates the grandeur of Italy. In these literary studies, as in the later discourses on the " University of Bologna," " Poetry in the Fourth Crusade " and the " Perpetual Liberty of San Marino," Carducci's prose, for all his solid erudition, is the prose of a poet, elaborately articulated,

rhythmical, brilliantly coloured, oratorical in its appeal. His style was formed by diligent study of the best models and constant exercise, as he himself confessed, and if his poetry is his chief title to fame, his prose works will remain the finest examples of Italian prose in the later nineteenth century, though for certain effects it is surpassed by the more sumptuous harmony of D'Annunzio's periods. It is curious that Carducci, to whom from his schooldays poetry was the "art of the gods," should have formed his prose style long before he arrived at poetical maturity; yet it certainly was the case. The introduction to Politian's poems contains passages which he never surpassed, while at that date (1863) he could by no means have been called anything but a poet of more promise than achievement.

Carducci's early days at Bologna were free neither from care nor trouble of mind. His letters to his friends show that he was still hard pressed for money and yet bitterly felt the necessity of having to do hack-work when all he cared for was his art. Not only had he to bear all the house-

hold expenses, but the necessity of starting his brother in life and the needs of members of his wife's family were an additional burden. Were it not for his colleague Teza, he writes on one occasion, from whom he could borrow, he would not know what to do towards the end of the month ; at another time he cries :—

" Lavoro, lavoro, lavoro ; ed è vero qualche soddisfazione l' ho avuta : ma l' animo mio non è contento : perché io sono innamorato della bellezza dell' arte in sè stessa, e questa dispero di raggiungerla, e mi sento ghiacciare l' animo e l' ingegno. O se le sventure non coglievano la mia famiglia anzi tempo, e avessi potuto fare anch' io qualche cosa (e non solo scribacchiare).[1]

Moreover, he had neither the gift of making himself popular with ordinary people, nor the desire to do so. His refusal to suffer fools gladly, and his intolerance both of

[1] " I work and work and work ; and it is true I have had some satisfaction : but my heart is not contented ; because I am in love with the beauty of art in itself, and I despair of attaining it, and I feel that my heart and my intellect are becoming frozen. Oh, if only misfortunes had not overtaken my family, and I too had been able really to do something (and not only to scribble.)"

the political and artistic views then prevalent in Italy kept him in a constant state of furious irritation, which made his heart at times, as he wrote to Chiarini,[1] a nest of vipers, spoiled his sleep and roused him in the morning with a desire to do violence. So far as Bologna was concerned this state of exasperation gradually passed away. His lectures, which were at first only attended by six pupils, became every year more and more crowded, till he was forced to make the fruitless request that strangers and ladies should stay away, as he was not a fashionable singer. Yet during the year of stress his own hearth at least remained happy. The letters to his wife show that he was devoted to her and to his little daughters, who were born in 1859 and 1863 respectively. When he was away from home he would write most anxiously for family news, send the most loving messages to his child, or promise to bring back a doll as soon as he was paid some money. How much Carducci owed to his wife will never be known, for she kept studiously in

[1] This particular letter was written in 1869 ("Letters," I, 127), the period of his most violent political poems.

the background, taking off his hands all household worries and accounts, surrendering all her claims on his company to the needs of his work and recreation, bringing up his children, bearing with his tempers and infidelities. At times she, too, lost her patience and forgot his greatness in his failings, but the balance of forbearance was certainly on her side, and it might have been expected that in the memoir by Chiarini, so old and intimate a friend, she would have been honoured by more than a curt, passing notice. It is only with the publication of the second volume of the "Letters," that any light has been thrown upon Carducci's more intimate family relations.

III

Except for the fierce ode *Dopo Aspromonte*, with its virulent attack on Napoleon III as "the Imperial Cain," Carducci composed very little poetry between the years 1861–1867. It was a period of spiritual and intellectual transition which issued in the new poetic style of the *Decennali*, 1867–1871. Nevertheless, in 1868 he published a second collection of his poems called *Levia Gravia* under the pseudonym of Enotrio Romano, which was a reissue with additions and alterations of the *Rime*, but contained none of the politically inspired poems which had appeared singly since 1859. There was, indeed, little reason why he should have wished to bring himself before the public in a poetical garb which he had already outgrown, unless it were, as M. Jeanroy suggests in his study, to compete with a new volume from the popular Zanella, whose agreeable

mixtures of a little religion and a little science under an ornamental icing of poetic form were anathema to Carducci. The public, however, paid no heed: *Levia Gravia* attracted little attention, and Carducci himself, though disappointed at the time, severely judged it later as the work of a poet who had faith neither in poetry nor in himself, who attempted novelty without the courage to break away from old habits, and who uttered a cry, but, afraid of the sound, allowed it to die away in the void.

The observation of Carducci's poetical development is made more difficult—though its main lines are evident—by the fact that in the definitive edition of his poems the chronological order has been deliberately obscured for artistic reasons, and the sections entitled *Juvenilia*, *Levia Gravia*, *Giambi ed Epodi* and *Rime Nuove* do not contain the exact poems originally collected and published under those names. The *Juvenilia*, for instance, now include many of the original *Levia Gravia*, and the *Levia Gravia* are increased by a number of political poems which were not in the

volume of 1868. A detailed examination, for which there is no room in a short biography, would show a distinct advance both in technical proficiency and poetic feeling between the earliest poems of the original *Rime* and the latest of the original *Levia Gravia*, but, in general, the *Juvenilia* and *Levia Gravia*, as printed in the definitive edition, may be taken as representing the first youthful and imperfect style of Carducci the poet. The spirit in which they were written may be gauged from the words of a letter to Chiarini in 1857, in which Carducci declares he will only send a few complimentary copies of the *Rime* to his friends; and the rest of Italy he addresses thus :—

"O monster of three hundred thousand heads, Giosue Carducci will not present you with his little book for you to say that he is a lad of great promise, if only he is converted to a good Christian philosophy. No, great beast, I will spit in the face of your philosophy, and I wish to believe in the Muses and in Apollo for ever. . . . Yes, hurrah for Phœbus Apollo! who worketh afar, Patarean, Delian, Cynthian Apollo, and death to him who says no. . . . By

the god Apollo! tell them that I believe absolutely in the religion of Homer, and that I do not write mythology for the sake of imitation or because I am a bit of a scholar, but because I believe that there alone is true poetry—*true poetry*, do you hear?"

Thus did the must bubble in the hearts of the *amici pedanti*, and the working was that of the new force which led to the struggle for Italy's freedom. The hindrances to freedom and unity were the yoke of Austria, the power of the Papacy, and the general unwillingness for patriotic endeavour. It was not strange, then, that the poets of the rising generation in their artistic creed should defy the ideals of those who acquiesced in Italy's mournful state. The power of the priests kept Italy under the oppressor; then the gods of Greece should be proclaimed instead of the God of Rome: in poetry the romanticism of the devout Manzoni was popular; then a return to classicism should be the war-cry, Virgil and Horace, Leopardi and Foscolo should be the new heroes: the prevalent literary style was debased; then a return to the best models of the *trecento*

was imperative: tyrants were ruling in every little State; then let them remember Harmodius and Aristogeiton. All Carducci's young disgust is all expressed in the last line of one of his early sonnets :—

Il secoletto vil che christianeggia.[1]

In these early poems are to be found the seeds of all those qualities that distinguish his poetic genius in its maturity, the lofty patriotism, the love of freedom, the hatred of servility and oppression, the fierce antagonism to Christianity, the approval of a stern simplicity in life, the scorn of the coward and flatterer, the despondency before the comparison of past glory with present dishonour, together with a sense of beautiful form and a classic purity of diction. Their faults lie not in the poet's want of high ideals, but in his failure to make his ideals glow with an intensity of personal conviction. Carducci was not a Keats or a Schubert who in the days of youthful energy found within himself a lyrical fountain of amazing richness ready to well forth irresistibly. He was a scholar

[1] "The vile little age that Christianizes."

as well as a poet, and his very enthusiasms had wound round him an intellectual casing from which he never wholly freed himself. In the *Juvenilia* and *Levia Gravia* originality is entirely muffled, and all that appears is a most praiseworthy facility in imitating good models, Dante, Petrarch, Horace, Alfieri, Leopardi and, above all, Ugo Foscolo, with a rather less praiseworthy fluency in handling classical mythology and history. There is no originality, no force, no passion, however much these were working under the dull, hard surface. The reflective sonnets are the most satisfactory to read, while the poems that should have expressed the utmost poignancy of feeling, the *canzone* to the memory of his brother or the celebrations of the great victories of 1859, are, more than any, cold and lifeless.

But the poet was destined to struggle through the casing of the scholar, or rather in the glow of his passion that casing was to become incandescent. Carducci has related in prose how he passed from the "declamazioni consuetudinarie" of 1859 to the genuine passion of the *Giambi ed*

Epodi.[1] His agreement with the majority in enthusiasm for the house of Savoy was short-lived. Disappointed by the Peace of Villafranca, disgusted by Aspromonte, he again entered the ranks of the minority, and saved himself from becoming the popular poet of Tuscany by "taking a cold bath of philology and wrapping himself in the winding-sheet of erudition." He plunged into the history of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in the preparation of his professorial courses, and at the same time studied the revolutionary movement in history and literature, thus confirming himself in that hatred of asceticism, which with its repudiation of beauty, opposition to progress and encouragement of oppression was, in his view, the lamentable heritage of Christianity. At the same time poetry filled his thoughts, exasperating him with the insufficiency of his art for the magnitude of his ideals. In 1861 he writes to Chiarini of projected poems and adds :—

"But I fear I shall not succeed in writing any more verses. The ideas in my mind are

[1] In *Raccoglimenti*, the preface to the *Poesie* of 1871.

too large, and I should not be content to go on writing verses as I have hitherto. See how great is my pride, when I speak of the large ideals I have in my head. But it is good to show myself as I am. I would not be content, in fine, to be mediocre; and now I am a mediocre versifier."

And again :—

"I am always grinding poetry in my head, but never write a verse, out of sheer terror, or rather despair, lest the result should not correspond with my idea. But one day something will burst out: and it will either be a horrible *fiasco*, and then good-bye to poetry, or it will be something."

What broke out one night in 1863 was the poem *A Satana*, a long poem in short-lined stanzas to the spirit of natural beauty, progress and rebellion which he personified in Satan, the immortal foe of a drab and oppressive religion, under whose banner he ranges, rather incongruously, the gods of Greece, Horace and Virgil, Wyclif and Huss, Luther and Savonarola, and the steam engine. The poem was not printed till 1865 and then only privately, but in 1869 it was republished on the day when

the Œcumenical Council was held in Rome. Then it obtained its real *succès de scandale*, and for many years afterwards Carducci was undeservedly praised and stupidly reviled as the "poet of Satan," though he had easily explained away the apparent demonism.

The unpremeditated fervour of

> Salute, O Satana,
> O rebellione,
> O forza vindice
> De la ragione ![1]

is certainly refreshing after the frigid imitations of the *Juvenilia*, but there is nothing exalted either in the content or the form. The "begli anni dal '61 al '65, vissuti in pacifica e ignota solitudine tra gli studi e la famiglia" were soon to bring forth far nobler fruit.

[1] "Hail, Satan! Hail, rebellion! Hail, avenging force of reason!"

IV

What saved Carducci was, in reality, not so much the "cold bath of philology," but an access of political indignation which wrought his soul to a white heat. The hopes raised by the alliance with Prussia were dashed by the defeats of Custoza and Lissa, and Carducci's faith in the House of Savoy was for a time entirely destroyed. Garibaldi became his hero, republicanism his political creed. Throwing aside all his paraphernalia of erudition, abandoning the cunningly chased sonnet and the elaborate *canzone*, he burst into the short, fierce rhythms and the passionate invective of the *Decennali*, the chief of which now stand in the first book of the *Giambi ed Epodi*. No longer did he gather graceful bouquets from Dante, Petrarch, Foscolo and Leopardi, no longer was he concerned with Phœbus, Apollo or even with Satan, but in the manner—often with the very

words—of Victor Hugo's *Les Châtiments* and the *Iambes* of Auguste Barbier, he poured out the vials of his scorn and loathing upon Pio Nono, Napoleon III and those who were responsible for the deaths of patriots in the last upheaval before Italy's complete unity was attained. The epodes begin with the address *Agli Amici della Valle Tiberina*, written in August, 1867, which is a battle song for Garibaldi's march on Rome. Shortly afterwards "the *chasse-pots* did wonders" at Mentana: Carducci answered with the bellow of rage *Meminisse Horret*. This was followed by the epodes on the death of Eduardo Corazzini and on the execution of Giuseppe Monti and Gaetano Tognetti. In November, 1868, the month of this last epode, the authorities determined to free themselves from this inflammatory poet. By a ministerial decree he was transferred to the chair of Latin at Naples, but as Carducci refused to go, the decree had to be revoked. A few months later he was suspended from his functions, but he remained in Bologna, publishing in newspapers the sonnets *Heu Pudor* (1869) and the epode on the death of

Giovanni Cairoli (1870). He had sent his defence to the Consiglio Superiore, and before any further measures could be taken the ministry had changed and he was restored without any more ado. The *Decennali*, as published in the collected *Poesie* of 1871, end with the calmer and more hopeful note of the ode on the marriage of Cesare Parenzo, where the poet lifts his eye from the sordidness of the present to love and joy and the hopes of a new generation.

O monti, O fiumi, O prati ;
O amori integri e sani ;
O affetti esercitati
Fra una schiatta d'umani
Alta gentile e pura ;
O natura, O natura ;

Da questo reo mercato
Di falsitadi, anelo
A voi, come piagato
Augello al proprio cielo
Dal fango ond' è implicata
L 'ala al sereno usata.[1]

[1] "Oh, mountains ! oh, rivers ! oh, meadows ! oh, stainless, healthy loves ! oh, passions that inspire a lofty, noble, pure host of mortal men ! oh, nature ! oh, nature ! from this ignoble mart of falsehoods I pant for you, as a stricken bird for its own heavens from the mire that trammels its pinion, its pinion used to the untroubled sky."

In Carducci's *Giambi ed Epodi* not only is there no real appreciation of the European political situation between 1866 and 1870, but there is a violence which is often either revolting or slightly ridiculous. The effective satirist is one who preserves a dispassionate attitude to events, and, as Professor Croce points out, Carducci was far too angry to be effective. The interests of the Papacy were, no doubt, a great obstacle to the winning of Rome, but to represent Pio Nono as a senile villain, rejoicing in bloodshed, as Carducci did in the epodes on Corazzini and on Monti and Tognetti, was a violent and unwarrantable distortion of the truth. It is possible to admire the vigour of the passage in the first where the poet cries out that with the bereft mother and the widowed wife he will rise before the Pope and say :—

" Triumph in thy splendid church of Saint Peter, old priest and infamous!

" Raise thy tremulous palms to heaven and sing—'Hosanna, mighty God!' The organ through the gilded vaults sends a death rattle.

"When thou turnest to the people and murmurest, 'The Lord be with you,' like an adulterous woman her lover thou regardest thy minions.

"Amid the wax lights murder gleams upon the steel barrels: thou seest it, and joy veils thy pupils with heartfelt tears.

"Bend over the holy mystery that is consumed, bend thy sad face: look, the chalice smokes with blood, and it is not that of Christ.

"Alas! it is pure blood of Italian veins, noble blood and clear! And a drop there is from that breast which these women loved;

"These women who bowed to thy decrees a humble heart, an obedient ear, and in their privacy even prayed for thee, thou savage-hearted old man:"

but it is only possible to deplore the extravagance of the picture in the second: of the old Pope, still warm from his bed, rubbing his hands before the Vatican windows over the prospect of a bloody execution. Even Carducci's warmest friend considered that he had here exceeded all bounds.

Nevertheless, with all their disfigurements and ugly frothings at the mouth, the *Giambi ed Epodi* mark a distinct advance in Carducci's poetry. There is no longer any sense of the tentative, of the literary exercise. The poet handles his instrument without hesitation and there is no doubt as to the sincerity of his poetic feeling. Not only do these poems palpitate with life, instead of lying cold as marble, but there are flashes in them of that force and simplicity of vision, that sculpturesque vigour of delineation, and that deep emotion expressed with a masterly economy that are the lasting qualities of Carducci's finest poetry. Thus in the ode *Agli Amici della Valle Tiberina* his deep feeling for the beauty of natural scenery appears in the stanzas :—

Fiume famoso il breve piano inonda ;
Ama la vite i colli ; e, a rimirar
Dolce, fra verdi querce ecco la bionda
Spiga in alto a l' alpestre aura ondeggiar.

De i vecchi prepotenti in su gli spaldi
Pasce la vacca e mira lenta il pian ;
E de le torri, ostello di ribaldi,
Crebbe l' utile casa al pio villan.

Dove il bronzo de' frata in su la sera
Solo rompeva, od accrescea, l' orror,
Croscia il mulino, suona la gualchiera
E la canzone del vendemmiator.[1]

And in the poem on the death of Eduardo Corazzini he breaks off his passionate apostrophe to France and laments his lost friend, picturing him in happier days, with dog and gun, hunting the valleys of Pieve San Stefano :—

Ahi lasso ! ma de' tuoi monti a l' aprico
Aer e nel chiostro ameno
Piú non ti rivedrò, mio dolce amico,
Come al tempo sereno.

Per l' alpestre cammino io ti seguía ;
E 'l tuo fucil di certi
Colpi il silenzio ad or ad or ería
De' valloni deserti.

L' alta Roma io cantava in riva al fiume
Famoso a l' universo :
E il can latrando a le cadenti piume
Rompeva a mezzo il verso,

[1] "A famous river floods the narrow plain ; the vine loves the hills ; and, sweet to look back on, see between the green oaks the golden corn waving on high in the Alpine air ! In the wake of sturdy veterans the cow is feeding and slowly gazes at the plain ; and from the towers, that once harboured rebels, has grown the cottage for holy uses of labour. Where the bronze bell of the monks upon an evening alone broke, or increased, the horror of strife, now splashes the mill-wheel, now sounds the sickle and the song of the vintager."

O a te accennando usciva impaziente
Fuor de la macchia bruna;
Or raspa su la tua fossa recente,
E piagnesi a la luna.[1]

All the middle section of this poem has a noble and dignified beauty which contrasts as sharply with its final imprecations, as in the ode on Giovanni Cairoli the pathetic evocation of the lonely home, where the only one remaining of five heroes hides his face that he may not wake sad memories in his mother's heart, with the brutality of

E il tradimento e la vigliaccheria,[2]
Sí come cani in piazza,
Ivi s' accoppian . . .

and the last bitter cry

La nostra patria è vile

[1] "Alas! But I shall never see thee more, my pleasant friend, as in the untroubled time, in the sunny air of thy mountains and in the lovely cloister. I used to follow thee along the mountain path; and thy gun with well-aimed shots now and again broke the silence of the deserted valleys. I would be singing of noble Rome beside the river famous to the universe: and the dog, barking at the falling leaves, would break the verse in the midst, or, signalling to thee, would rush impatiently from the brown thicket; now he is scratching on thy fresh grave, and baying to the moon."

[2] "And treason and cowardliness couple there, like dogs in the square."

After the publication of the *Poesie* in 1871 Carducci began to calm down, albeit gradually. Irritated still by the inglorious tameness of the entry into Rome, and smarting in his sense of Italy's dishonour too easily forgotten, he continued to fire ironical minute guns—*Feste ed Oblii*, *Io Triumphe* and the *Canto dell' Italia Che Va in Campidoglio*—as counterblasts to the national festivities ; and in 1872 he wrote a fine poem, only spoiled in its allusions to *chevaliers d'industrie* in the last verse, on the fifth anniversary of Mentana. Pure poetry, the beauties of the *Rime Nuove* and the *Odi Barbare*, had already begun to lift his soul above political strife, and, as he wrote in 1882, the *Giambi ed Epodi* ceased in 1872 for three reasons : because his political ideal had been accomplished in the union of Italy ; because the electoral reforms brought universal suffrage into a fair way of realization ; and because poetry of that kind can only be written during a short period in a poet's life, and when the period is past, an artist cannot maintain the attitude without assuming an empty pose. Carducci was a partisan but never

a man of party: his artistic honesty was unimpeachable. He never prostituted his art for hire or for popularity, nor did he ever write a verse but at the dictation of his own heart alone. Though ambitious he cared nothing for public opinion and, heedless of his identification in the popular mind with any political formula, he changed his attitude as he modified his convictions. Thus he appropriately ends the *Giambi ed Epodi*, in the definitive edition, with the *Canto dell' Amore* written in 1877, in which the poet looking down from the Rocca Paolina of Perugia hears from the villages and plains, the lakes and woods, the farms and monasteries and streets :—

> un cantico solo in mille canti,
> Un inno in voce di mille preghiere :
> —Salute, O genti umane affaticate !
> Tutto trapassa e nulla può morir.
> Noi troppo odiammo e sofferimmo. Amate.
> Il mondo è bello e santo è l' avvenir.[1]

With an assumed, and rather tasteless, rusticity he offers to be reconciled even

[1] "One single chant in a thousand songs, a hymn in the voice of a thousand prayers : 'Hail, oh human races tired with strife !' All things pass but nothing can die. We have hated and suffered too much. Love then. The world is lovely and the future blesséd."

with the Pope. "Open the Vatican," he jovially cries. "I take by the arm that ancient gaoler of himself. Come: I call a health to liberty: citizen Mastai, raise your glass!"

V

In 1870 Carducci lost his mother, and in November of the same year a far more poignant sorrow struck him down—the death of his three-year-old son Dante. This was the bitterest grief of all his life. The object of all his joys and hopes was gone, and though he supported the blow with all his sturdy courage, many a time in the years to come his thoughts turned sadly to the infant's grave. None of Carducci's poems are inspired by a more tender human emotion than the two called from his heart by this tragedy : the sonnet *Funere Mersit Acerbo* and the *Pianto Antico* are by themselves a sufficient answer to the judgment that Carducci was no real poet, but only a man of letters with consummate metrical skill. Economy of personal emotion was for him a moral law in poetry, but no luxuriance of lamentation could be more heartbreaking than the

brief sigh of *Pianto Antico:* in its four stanzas speaks the calm despair of a Greek epigram; it is the sublimation of human suffering over the irrevocable fact of death.

L' albero a cui tendevi
La pargoletta mano,
Il verde melograno
Da' bei vermigli fior,

Nel muto orto solingo
Rinverdi tutto or ora
E giugno lo ristora
Di luce e di calor.

Tu fior de la mia pianta
Percossa e inaridita,
Tu de l' inutil vita
Estremo unico fior,

Sei nella terra fredda,
Sei nella terra negra;
Nè il sol piú ti rallegra
Nè ti risveglia amor.[1]

This nevertheless, was the last blow of fate to disturb the tenour of the poet's life for many years. The publication of the

[1] "The tree to which thou wast wont to stretch thy baby hand, the green pomegranate with its fair scarlet flowers, grows greener every hour in the silent, lonely garden, and June restores it with light and warmth. Thou flower of my stricken, withered stock, thou one and only flower of my useless life, art in the cold earth, art in the black earth; the sun rejoices thee no more, no more does love awake thee."

Nuove Poesie in 1873 not only won him recognition in Italy as a great poet, but laid the foundations of a European reputation. The book was noticed in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, the *Allgemeine Zeitung* and the *Neue Freie Presse* with the highest praise. Its first edition was soon exhausted, and its success sold out the *Poesie* of 1871 which had been lying on Barbèra's hands. The *Nuove Poesie* contained forty-four poems, none of which had appeared in any collection of Carducci's poems. In the definitive edition its contents are divided between the second book of the *Giambi ed Epodi* and the earlier books of *Rime Nuove*. It bears witness to an extremely fruitful two years of poetic composition in which Carducci had followed with wonderful versatility very diverse streams of inspiration. *Furor politicus* was responsible for *Feste ed Oblii* and other poems of 1871 which were mentioned in the last chapter; certain poems, like *A certi censori*, are vigorous retaliations upon critics; *Qui Regna Amore* and *Sole e Amore* are classically erotic, the *Idillio Maremmano* and *Pianto Antico* are purely personal, *Sui*

Campi di Marengo is the first of those magnificent essays in the form of the old popular ballads, narrating stirring events of Italy's past history, which culminated in the unhappily incomplete *Canzone di Legnano*, while the perfect and celebrated sonnet *Il Bove* breathes the reverent spirit of Virgil or Millet in the contemplation of pastoral beauty :—

T' amo, o pio bove ; e mite un sentimento
Di vigore e di pace al cor m' infondi,
O che solenne come un monumento
Tu guardi i camp i liberi e fecondi,

O che al giogo inchinandoti contento
L' agil opra de l' uom grave secondi :
Ei t' esorta e ti punge, e tu co' l lento
Giro de' pazïenti occhi rispondi.

Da la larga narice umida e nera
Fuma il tuo spirto, e come un inno lieto
Il mugghio nel sereno aer si perde ;

E del grave occhio glauco entro l' austera
Dolcezza si rispecchia ampio e quiete
Il divino del pian silenzio verde.[1]

[1] "I love thee, holy ox ; into my heart thou pourest gently a feeling of vigour and peace, whether stately as a monument thou gazest at the free and fruitful fields, or whether complacently bowing to the yoke thou gravely secondest the active work of man : he urges thee and goads thee, and thou answerest with a slow

The most strikingly novel quality of the *Nuove Poesie* was the unmistakable influence of Heine, whose poetry and prose seems to have made a profound impression on Carducci. The Italian poet's irritable temper found the irony of the *Reisebilder* and the *Lieder* extremely congenial, though he also appreciated the tender beauty of Heine's happier moods. This influence cannot be called entirely fortunate, at least so far as Carducci's poetry was concerned. Heine's pathetic self-pity is something so individual and so devoid of pose that it is a particularly dangerous object of imitation. Carducci, not content with composing some very fine verse translations of certain *Lieder*, did undoubtedly imitate Heine's gloomy boisterousness, that irony with a tear in the eye, when his real emotional situation, not to speak of his natural genius, was entirely unlike that of the witty exile from Germany. Carducci at his greatest moments was serenely con-

turn of thy patient eyes. From thy broad nostrils moist and black thy breath smokes up, and like a happy hymn thy lowing dies upon the calm air; and within the solemn softness of thy grave grey eye is reflected, vast and still, the divine green silence of the plain."

templative, splendidly evocative, solemnly admonitory or classically objective : when he adopts a Heinesque attitude the effect is like the distortion of naturally kindly features. The genuine feeling of *Idillio Maremmano*, for instance, is spoiled by the petulance of its ending, for when a distinguished young professor and brilliant man of letters, contentedly married, with a devoted wife and three children, writes towards his fortieth year :—

Nel bel mese di maggio
Io sotterrai l' Amor
De' nuovi soli al raggio
Sotto un' acacia in fior.

. . . .

Ahi, ma la tomba è cuna
Al picciolo vampir !
Al lume de la luna
Vuol tutte notti uscir.

. . . .

Ma perchè piú non possa
Il reo vampir uscir,
Dee su l' aperta fossa
Un prete benedir.

L' incanto allor si scioglie
E il morto in cener va ;
Piú da vestirsi spoglie
Il démone non ha.

L' avello del tuo petto,
O donna, io l' aprirò :
Il morto piccoletto
Vedervi dentro io vo' ;

Io vo' che putre e mézzo
Polvere il torni al fin :
Prete sarà il disprezzo
Ed acqua santa il vin[1]—

the effect is a trifle ridiculous.

Nevertheless, Carducci was now on the threshold of his most brilliant and successful period. The tentatives were over, and with ever-increasing certainty the poet overtook and easily surpassed the man of letters, who had been hitherto in advance. Italian critics, indeed, especially those of moderate political views like Guerzoni and Zendrini, attacked him with venom and stupidity, but Carducci, always more than ready to break a lance with opponents,

[1] *Anacreontica Romantica.* "In the merry month of May I buried Love in the ray of new suns under a flowering acacia. . . . Alas, but the tomb cradles a tiny vampire! In the light of the moon he comes out every night. . . . But that the evil vampire may no more come out, a priest must say a blessing over the open grave. Then the spell is loosened and the corpse dissolves to dust; the demon has no longer a corpse for his vestment. O Lady, I will open the tomb that is thy breast: I wish to see the tiny dead thing in it; I wish that he may find his end in soft, crumbling dust: disdain shall be my priest, and wine my holy water."

pulverized them in the vigorous and witty prose of *Critica e Arte*, and in the early stanzas of his poem *Intermezzo*. Meanwhile he did not neglect more serious work. In 1875 he produced his edition of Ariosto's Latin poems, and in 1876 that *Saggio di Petrarca* which led to the joint commentary on Petrarch with Severino Ferrari which appeared in 1899. From this time onwards, says Chiarini in his memoir, it is impossible to follow Carducci in all the varieties of his work.

"His lectures at the University, his critical studies, his polemics, his works of erudition, his poetry, competed for his hours and his minutes, for in the same day he passed from the one to the other with wonderful agility and tirelessness. He prepared for lectures, corrected the matter and the proofs of his volumes of prose, wrote articles for the *Nuova Antologia* and other journals, attended to new editions of his poems, never content with himself; he wrote reports for the Deputazione di Storia Patria, gave terrible thrashings to his critics, and composed new poems."

Photographs of Carducci at this time show him as a man of powerful build and a

striking countenance. A beard accentuated rather than hid the firm lines of his jaw, his shock of black hair was aggressively brushed back from his massive forehead, and his eyes, shadowed by a combative brow, bore striking witness to his vigorous personality. Even in the days of his well-deserved fame he did not relax his simplicity of life. Chiarini draws an interesting picture of his normal day. On getting out of bed he drank a cup of coffee, and went straight to work in his study. At mid-day he took a light lunch of chocolate or eggs and continued his work till two on his lecturing days, till five or six on the others. He dined about six, rejoicing to open for a friend one of those excellent bottles of wine which, after books, were his sole luxury. After dinner he went out to meet a few close friends at a *café*. With these, chief among whom were his ex-pupils Ugo Brilli and Severino Ferrari, he joked and talked, leaving the *café* for a short walk which ended in a final station at some small hostelry. The merry company of friends, with whom he loved to indulge in boisterous humour at the

expense of those in authority, walked with him to his flat, where he lit his candle and went to bed, reading himself to sleep with one of his favourite classics. Next morning the round began again. Certain censors professed to find his evening recreations undignified, not seeing that a straightforward character looks for much-needed relaxation where it is truly to be found without simulating a pleasure in less congenial if more exalted society. His wife had juster cause of complaint, not only because his family had so little of his company while it suffered the effects of his periodical ill-tempers, but also because he began undoubtedly to find pleasure in female company outside it.

There is a distinct erotic element in Carducci's poetry from 1873 onwards. In the *Primavere Elleniche* the poet addresses his mistress as Lina; from 1873 to 1876 a Lidia appears; in 1879 he composed *Fuori alla certosa* for Delia; no less than six poems were subsequently addressed to Lalage, while the last of his divinities was Annie, whose identity has been self-revealed. To regard these Greek names as

representing abstractions, as some have done, is a pure absurdity. Carducci, it is true, did not sentimentalize about love, but regarded it simply as one among other sensuous pleasures, hating what he called the "civetterie del io mugghetto." But nobody reading *Ruit Hora* or *Alla Stazione* can possibly doubt that the Lidia whose kisses he demanded and to whom he sadly bade adieu at the railway station was a creature of flesh and blood with whom, in the ordinary human sense, he was in love. Moreover, there is a remarkable letter, written to his wife in 1874 after a quarrel, in which Carducci most penitently admits that he has behaved like a brute :—

"I ask your forgiveness : last night I was a beast : you deserve a better man than me : all day you were working for me, seeing after everything : and in return I treated you in the evening as I did. But, believe me, at certain moments I am no longer responsible for what I say and do : when that horror (I don't know how—it must be a disease) enters my heart, I see clearly no longer, I see all black, everything irritates me, I could smash everything. At certain moments you must avoid doing the

least thing to me. I am bad, I know; but I am also unwell, nervous, enraged: it is a disorder of the blood and the nerves. . . . Don't believe anything I said last night: at those moments I am wicked, and say all the worst things I can from a desire to hurt at least with words. Good-bye, dear Elvira: believe me that I love you more than you think: do not trust certain appearances: the others are all fugitive things, fancies, amusements: you I love seriously; and, if you were a bit less severe, you would see it yourself. But at heart you love me, but then you treat me badly."

It cannot be said that Carducci ceased to indulge in his *fantaisie*, as artists must, and their wives are wise who admit the necessity. Yet domestic peace was restored on this occasion, and the real happiness of Carducci's life remained unbroken till his death.

In 1876 Carducci stood for election as deputy at Lugo in the republican interest: he was elected, but was saved from wasting his time in the Chamber by the law limiting the number of functionaries who may sit as deputies, his name coming out unluckily

in the ballot. There is little doubt, however, that his political views were beginning to soften. The *Canto dell' Amore* was composed at the end of 1877, and in 1878 the ode *Alla Regina*, written after the royal visit to Bologna when Carducci had been presented to the Queen, scandalized the democrats enormously. Carducci, both in letters at the time, and a few years later in *Eterno Femminino Regale*, a charming self-defence in prose, asserted that this ode was only a chivalrous salutation to a woman who openly admired his poetry and whose gracious appearance won a compliment even from a Girondin. His defence was genuine enough, but he was, nevertheless, subconsciously changing. He had refused the Cross of Savoy, because acceptance implied taking the oath of allegiance, yet there is so great a difference between *Feste ed Oblii* or *Versaglia* and this ode *Alla Regina* that the fears of the Extreme Left were certainly justified.

In 1880 Carducci's eldest daughter married, an occasion which inspired the two beautiful poems *Colli toscani e voi, pacefiche selve d' olive* and *Per la Nozze*

di mia Figlia. Both of them are among the *Odi Barbare*, the first book of which appeared in 1877, the second in 1882. This portion of Carducci's poetical work, the most distinctive and the most famous, requires a chapter to itself.

VI

Carducci's *Odi Barbare*, now divided (not chronologically) into two books, appeared originally in three books dated respectively 1877, 1882 and 1889. The first book, though the poet's reputation sold a thousand copies in a few days and three editions during the following three years, was quite overshadowed by the enormous success of Olindo Guerrini's *Postuma di Lorenzo Stecchetti*, which Zanichelli published at the same time. Moreover, in spite of one or two appreciative articles, the critics of Italy saluted the first *Odi Barbare* with a chorus of condemnation, no longer, it is true, denying Carducci's genius, but deploring the fatal aberration of so great a poet. Their outcry was entirely futile, for to the *Odi Barbare* was largely due the almost excessive veneration for Carducci in Italy towards the end of his career.

It was the novelty which, as usual, surprised the critics out of their senses, for in these "barbarian"[1] odes Carducci abandoned the usual rhymed metres of Italian poetry to compose in hexameters, elegiac distichs and the various lyrical metres adopted by Horace in his Odes. It is impossible in this short biography to discuss adequately the prosody of Carducci's *Odi Barbare:* while indicating to the reader Mr. Bickersteth's admirably lucid essay on the subject,[2] it must suffice to point out briefly Carducci's aim and his method of pursuing it. The problem of adapting classical metres is not unfamiliar to us in English poetry, for we have the accentual hexameters of Longfellow and Clough and the new quantitative hexameters of the Poet Laureate. The difficulty lies in the fact that modern languages have lost the sense of quantity upon which rested the underlying metrical unity of the Greco-Latin poetry, giving an easily appreciable congruity to a scheme of speech-

[1] i.e. in metres which would strike the modern Italian as *barbari* or outlandish.

[2] See Bibliography.

accents varying from line to line. The elements of modern metres are speech-accent and stress or varying vocal pitch. The problem, then, of writing modern poetry in Greco-Latin metres is how to supply the missing element of quantity. This problem—exceptionally acute with our own language owing to its multiplicity of accents—was by no means simple in the less complicated Italian. Attempts at its solution had been made by many Italian poets before Carducci with no very great success. They had either made their speech-accents coincide invariably with the metrical *ictus*, as Clough did, thus losing the charm of variety within unity which was essential to Latin and Greek poetry; or, like Dr. Bridges,[1] they invented new arbitrary rules of quantity for their own language, thus giving an impression of no metrical unity at all; or, again, some of them, Chiabrera in particular, were pioneers in the path which Carducci followed, which was to observe the typical speech-accents of Latin verses and to see

[1] Though he would, of course, deny the absence of metrical unity.

what Italian verse of the same number of syllables most accurately reproduced them. Carducci's metres, in fine—elegiacs, alcaics, sapphics, asclepiads and the rest—from the point of view of prosody, are combinations of recognized Italian verses, all of which are common to the great body of Italian poetry. Moreover, coupled verses, *versi accoppiati*, were not an innovation but occurred frequently in rhyme; there is, for instance, a sonnet by Carducci:—

> Il sole tardo ne 'l invernale
> Ciel le caligini scialbe vincea[1]—

which is in *quinarii accoppiati*: the innovation of the *Odi Barbare* lay in the fact that they were not rhymed and that they were combined upon the system of the Greco-Latin lyric, not upon that of the *canzone*, *ballata*, or sonnet traditional to Italy.

The idea of composing *Odi Barbare* had been in Carducci's mind ever since his student days, when he wrote many translations and imitations of Horace's odes;

[1] "The late sun in the winter sky conquered the pallid darkness."

and there is a letter to Chiarini in 1857,[1] giving a summary of all previous attempts by Italian poets and referring to his own efforts to improve upon them, which shows that he had already studied the subject with great thoroughness. After 1870 a further stimulus was given to him by his excursions into German literature. Not only was he brought under the influence of Heine, but he was also introduced to the *Elegie Romane* of Goethe and the classical odes of Platen. These prompted him to ask why that which could be done in the hard and stubborn German should not be equally possible in the more flexible Italian, as he wrote to Chiarini in 1873, sending one of his earliest barbarian odes, *Su l'Adda*. In the same letter he adds :—

"Queste letture (i.e. of Goethe) mi fan ritornare con tutta l' anima e la persuasione alla grande poesia greca. In fondo, confessiamolo, fu la piú gran poesia della terra : Omero, Pindaro, Sofocle, Aristofane, Teocrito, sono gli ultimi confini del bello di primo getto, giovenile, florido, sereno. Dopo viene il riflesso, il contorto, il vecchio. Noi abbiamo

[1] "Letters," I, 48–51.

dei *frissonnements* d' inverno, e crediamo che sieno i brividi della ispirazione."[1]

This sounds rather like a return to the creed of the *amici pedanti*, which, in fact, Carducci never entirely gave up: and M. Jeanroy in his excellent study acutely points out that Carducci's enthusiasm for a return to antiquity forces us to ask, "What antiquity—Homer or Theocritus? Pindar or Sophocles?" Carducci's conception of beauty, it may be said, was that of Periclean Athens, a serene appreciation devoid of romantic "sensibility," but in the *Odi Barbare* the only models of form are Horace and Ovid, while the intellectual content, whether the subject be historical or personal, is purely modern. The classical mythology which overweighted his early poems in rhyme was practically abandoned, and, though in recalling Italy's glorious

[1] "This reading (of Goethe) makes me come back with all my heart and conviction to the great poetry of Greece. Ultimately, let us confess, it was the greatest poetry of the world: Homer, Pindar, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Theocritus, are the limits of spontaneous, youthful, florid and serene beauty. Afterwards comes the reflected, the complicated, the old. We have only *frissonnements* of winter, and believe that they are the spasms of inspiration."

history he went deep into the past, his evocations are so clearly dictated by his own attitude to the historical events of the later nineteenth century as to discount his own solemn utterance, " Sol ne 'l passato è il bello." Yet, however we regard the æsthetic ideas present to him in composing the *Odi Barbare*, we cannot refuse our admiration to the poems themselves. They are not mere metrical experiments, but living additions to the poetry of Italy, because Carducci, with eloquent economy of diction and crystalline purity of form, moulded in them the lofty inspirations of a truly noble poetic soul.

The unity of the *Odi Barbare* is only a unity of form : the thoughts and emotions enshrined in them are widely diverse. Some have a purely plastic beauty ; such are *Canto di Marzo*, *Sirmione*, *Presso l' Urna di Percy Bysshe Shelley* and the wonderful *La Madre :* others reflect moments of personal emotion, evoked by his daughter's marriage, by the grief of parting as in *Alla Stazione*, or by a serene joy in a sunny hour of life as in these four perfect stanzas *Alla Mensa dell' Amico :—*

Non mai dal cielo ch' io spirai parvolo
ridesti, o sole, bel nume, splendido
a me, sí come oggi ch' effuso
t' amo per l' ampie vie di Livorno.

Non mai fervesti, Bromio, ne i calici
consolatore saggio e benevolo,
com' oggi ch' io libo a l' amico
pensando i varchi de l' Apennino.

O Sole, O Bromio, date che integri,
non senza amore, non senza cetera,
scendiamo, a le placide ombre
—là dov' è Orazio—l' amico ed io.

Ma sorridete gli augurî a i parvoli
che, dolci fiori, la mensa adornano,
la pace a le madri, gli amori
ai baldi giovani e le glorie.[1]

There was no intrinsic reason why emotions of this kind should have been treated in Greco-Latin metres, but in the

[1] "Never from the air of heaven that I breathed as a boy didst thou smile on me so brightly, oh Sun, fair deity, as now when I adore thee to-day flooding the wide streets of Leghorn. Never in the cups didst thou foam, oh god of wine, wise and kindly comforter, as now when I drink to my friend to-day with my thoughts beyond the Apennines. Oh Sun, oh wine-god, grant that we, my friend and I, may go down to the untroubled shades —where Horace is—unravaged, not without love, not without the lyre. But smile happy auguries on the little ones, gentle flowers, that adorn this table, with peace for the mothers, and love and glory for the gallant striplings."

most individual poems of the *Odi Barbare*, those of historical inspiration, the metre bears witness to more than a merely technical preference. Adopting the idea expressed in four lines of Platen—that the noblest thoughts require the noblest metres for their expression—Carducci deliberately chose the alcaic, the sapphic and the elegiac as fitted by their gravity and dignity to bear the burden of his song when, enveloped in the seer's mantle, he swept his glance over the great past to draw from it a lesson for the present. In these historical odes the Italian poet, like his master Horace, invests the lyric form with an epic grandeur. Rising above the momentary vexations of the *Giambi ed Epodi*, forgetting the brief passion of mortal love, he rises, in the proud apostrophe *Nel Annuale della Fondazione di Roma*, in *Alle Fonti del Clitumno* and in two magnificent odes on Garibaldi, to the contemplation of those things which made his country great, or, as in *Miramar* and *Per la Morte di Napoleone Eugenio*, he holds up as an example the sure working of historic Nemesis, his equivalent of "dira Neces-

sitas," who visits upon the posterity of Napoleon and the Bourbons the outrages of their forbears against the divine laws of freedom.

None of the *Odi Barbare* more variously illustrates Carducci's qualities than *Alle Fonti del Clitumno.* A short analysis of this poem, in which is combined his love of nature, his patriotism, his flashing historic vision and his paganism, will show more clearly than anything short of reading the originals the particular workings of his mind when he dealt with the lofty theme of Italy. The ode is in the short sapphic metre, and opens with a beautiful description of the rustic scene at Colle Pissignano in Umbria, the source of the River Clitumnus. "Hail Umbria and Clitumnus!"—he proceeds—"Who brought the weeping willow to these sacred streams? May the wind snatch thee away, feeble plant, leaving the oak, the ivy and the giant cypresses. Witness of three empires, tell thy story! Tell how the Umbrian gave way to the light-armed Etruscan; how with the Roman legions the Roman god of war overcame the Etruscan Ciminus, but conquering and

conquered grew together in harmony till the Carthaginian storm threatened. Then the cry rose through the caves and mountains: 'Let the cowherd, the husbandman and the bridegroom leave all and run to his arms. Dire Hannibal threatens.'— How the sun laughed at the flight of the Numidians! Now all is still. The waters are scarce ruffled, the stream and the flowers are like jewels. Here, under the mountains and oaks, is the source of Italian song. Here the nymphs lived and danced under the moon, singing of the nuptials of Janus and Camesena. Now all is still, widowed Clitumnus. Thy temple is ruined and thy divinity fled. A Galilean with fair hair ascended the Capitol and planted his cross. The nymphs hid, and a procession clothed in black passed over the happy fields singing litanies, cursing where the sun blessed, cursing the works of love and light, drunk with dissolution, praying to be abject. Hail, human heart, beside Ilissus and Tiber! The sad days are past. To thee I renew the ancient praise, Italian mother of strong herds! The mountains, groves and waters of Umbria applaud my

song; opposite us, smoking and panting new industries in its course, the engine whistles."[1] It is thus that Carducci was continually knitting the past with the present, and rising from the purely artistic vision to the contemplation of all that makes true poetry and national greatness.

Carducci had not yet come to overburden his message with historical erudition. It is true that his historical poems of this period are allusive, but they do not require copious commentary: they need close attention on a reader's part, but they are never obscure, and the difficulty of which critics have complained is only due to the fact that the thought is condensed and that every word tells, exactly as in the odes of Horace. But Carducci, while he fully reaches his Roman master's height of patriotic exaltation, surpasses him in that feeling for plastic beauty which is at once truly Greek and truly modern. Horace might have written the historical part of *Alle Fonte del Clitumno*, but he would not have begun the ode with

[1] This is not a complete translation of the poem, but a summary.

that beautiful picture of an Umbrian peasant woman suckling her child as her husband speeds the plough, nor could he have felt so human a tragedy as did Carducci when he evoked the mother of the Napoleons, Letizia Buonaparte, standing in agony on the Corsican shore :—

Sta nella notte la corsa Niobe,
sta su la porta donde al battesimo
le usciano i figli, e le braccia
fiera tende su 'l selvaggio mare :

e chiama chiama, se da l' Americhe,
se di Britannia, se da l' arsa Africa,
alcun di sua tragica prole
spinto da morte le approdi in seno.[1]

[1] "The Corsican Niobe stands in the night, stands at the door whence her sons went out to baptism, and proudly stretches out her arms to the savage sea : and calls and calls, chance any of her tragic offspring, from the Americas, from Britain, from sun-scorched Africa, should come to harbour in her bosom, driven by the wind of death."

VII

During the ten years from 1880 to 1890 Carducci worked himself more hardly than ever. His educational work had already been increased by the duty of inspecting and superintending examinations in the schools of Tuscany and Lombardy—a duty responsible for one of his most charming letters, in which he amusingly relates to Severino Ferrari how he ate lunch while the little Lombard boys at Desenzano wrote essays on Tasso[1]—and in 1881 he was made a member of the Consiglio Superiore per l' Istruzione. The reports on examinations and the controversies arising out of his selections of prose for the use of schools, which are collected in his complete works, show how seriously he took these duties; nor is his conscientiousness surprising, seeing that he commented so severely in his controversial prose upon the low state of Italian culture. In 1884

[1] "Letters," II, 225–227.

there was some idea of creating for him a special post as inspector of classical studies for the whole of Italy, but for various reasons the suggestion came to nothing. Another abortive scheme was the offer to him of a lectureship on Dante at the University of Rome. The chair had been founded in 1887 by Parliament, but after Carducci's refusal of it nobody else was appointed. Chiarini in his memoir plainly says that the intention of Parliament was to found an anti-clerical pulpit from which the poet of "Satana" should weekly declaim against the Vatican. Carducci had no taste for such a business, and he felt, besides, that he already had enough lecturing to do. "I am tired, tired, tired of acting the professor," he wrote to Chiarini.

"Beginning again at Rome, now that I am almost old and disillusioned about everything, would have worn me out and made me more unhappy and annoyed at having accepted. I prefer solitary thought and laborious studies in a library or in my study to communication with the public whom, to speak the truth, I do not like. And I am more savage and bad-tempered than I was as a young man. Ac-

customed as I am to the professor's chair at Bologna, I cannot restrain a nervous irritation when I go to it. Just think what would have happened at Rome. I should have died a lunatic before my time. It is no use : when I have to appear before an audience which is not of young men known to me, it seems to me that they come to hear me as if I were a prima donna, or to look at me as if I were a ballet-dancer, and a desire comes over me to treat them as, in my view, they deserve. It is partly fear, partly pride."

As Chiarini says elsewhere, there always remained in Carducci "un fondo di scontentezza e d' irrequietudine."

After 1881, meetings of the Consiglio Superiore brought Carducci frequently to Rome, where he became acquainted with Angelo Sommaruga, the founder of that brilliant paper *La Cronaca Bizantina*, in which Gabriele D' Annunzio first won celebrity and which came to a scandalous end. Sommaruga seems to have secured the greater part of Carducci's literary and poetic compositions between 1882 and 1884. Not only were poems and articles by Carducci—who was quite unaware of Sommaruga's less creditable dealings—the

chief features of the paper, but the shrewd editor secured the right of publishing the three books of polemical prose *Confessioni e Battaglie* and the sonnet-sequence *Ça Ira* which stamps out, like a series of exquisite medallions, the France of 1792. It would appear that Sommaruga was continually importuning Carducci for "copy," though he was by no means prompt in his payments, but the poet bore him no ill-will, and, according to Enrico Thovez,[1] was one of the few who deigned to visit him in prison. Moreover, he found time to write solid articles for the *Nuova Antologia* on the House of Aleramo, the early work of Parini, and the life of the troubadour Rambaud de Vaqueiras; while in 1888 he delivered three magnificent discourses, *Lo Studio di Bologna*, *L' Opera di Dante* and *Jaufré Rudel*, following them in 1889 by the lecture on *Poesia e Italia nella Quarta Crociata*, which is one of the finest examples of his poetic prose. In 1886 he found time to stand as a candidate for Pisa in opposition to the government of Depretis, but he was defeated.

[1] *Il Pastor, la Gregge e la Zampogna.*

The *Rime Nuove* appeared in 1887, a volume containing all the poetry composed in rhymed metres since 1873, and headed by the dedication *Alla Rima* wherein the poet of the *Odi Barbare* saluted the " bella imperatrice,"

> Un ribelle ti saluta
> Combattuta,
> E a te libero s' inchina,[1]

and ending with the proud assertion of the poet's dignity entitled *Congedo*. The last three books were composed of the sonnets *Ça Ira*, a collection of translations from the German or Romance popular poetry, and the *Intermezzo* in its completed form. The *Rime Nuove* showed the many qualities of Carducci's genius at their highest development in the tender personal emotion of *Davanti San Guido*, the silvery music of *Visione*,[2] the brilliant sestina *Notte di Maggio*, the penetrating historic vision of *Ça Ira*, the satiric humour of the *Intermezzo*, the finish of the translations, and the fiery vigour of *La Leggenda di Teodorico* and *Faida da Comune*, wherein

[1] " A rebel salutes thee who has fought thee, and bows his free head to thee." [2] *Poesie*, p. 630.

he essayed the form of the old popular ballad in singing of the bewitched emperor and the medieval combat between Pisa and Lucca. In face of such poetry it is only a small point of criticism to regret again the unfortunate influence of Heine. When Carducci gives himself up to it without reserve, as in *Brindisi Funebre* or *In Carnia*, there is, perhaps, nothing more to be said than that the result is effective without reaching true greatness : but when Carducci chooses to proceed from one of his happiest individual moods to a typically Heinesque attitude of mind, as in *Davanti San Guido*, there is real cause for disappointment. The two elements cannot really blend, and though this poem is irresistibly beautiful, the slightly forced note of ironic pathos, not natural to Carducci, is vaguely disturbing.

No constitution, however robust, could resist such a stress of labour. Carducci was overworking himself, and he began to feel it. Even in 1881 on visiting the family of his son-in-law who farmed their own land he wrote to Chiarini of the "honest and upright old men," the

" robust and modest young men " and the " good, simple women," saying :—

" How much I would give to be one of them and not to be myself ! If my infamous grandfather had not dissipated everything foolishly, I might have been like that—a small landowner and good worker in my own fields, and not one, for instance, who has rows with Mario Rapisardi. Ah ! "

Such fits of depression are not uncommon in his letters, but in 1885 the first physical effects of strain showed themselves. The poet was seized with a sudden numbness of the right arm while working. It was a warning, though recovery was quick and he was able to pay a visit to his beloved Maremma. In June, however, he was again ill. The doctors diagnosed nervous exhaustion and prescribed mountain air. Carducci had already spent the summer at Caprile in the previous year : henceforward he regularly spent the summer holidays in the Alps, at Piano d' Arta, Courmayeur or Madesimo, where he was the guest of honour at his hotel, and in more than one letter he tells his wife with no little satisfaction how fellow-

guests honoured his birthday. These holidays, though even in repose he continued poetical composition and his reading was chiefly of the Greek and Latin classics, improved his health considerably. The letters to his wife show that during the first few years he was able to make quite arduous mountain excursions on foot, and in 1888 he began to take the baths at Madesimo under doctor's supervision. The most noteworthy events of his Alpine "cures" were his meetings with Queen Margherita, who was wont to spend the summer at Courmayeur. He paid her visits here in 1887 and 1889, long accounts of which were written to his wife. The Queen, as has been already mentioned, had a profound admiration for Carducci's poetry and never lost an opportunity of expressing her pleasure to him in person. In 1887 he read to her the *Notte di Maggio*, the *Congedo*, *Alla Rima* and *Davanti San Guido*, earning warm praises of his manner of reading. The interview lasted fifty minutes, and Carducci was impressed both by her graciousness and her intelligent appreciation. In 1889 he read to her the

new *Il Liuto e la Lira* which was specially dedicated to her. In his letter he wrote :—

"She kept us two hours, till three o'clock, speaking with great kindness and familiarity of many things. She wished me to read her the ode dedicated to her, 'The Lyre and the Lute.' I noticed that she remained most attentive and at one moment turned pale. Giacosa tells me, and tells everybody, that she shed tears. I also noticed . . . that she exclaimed, 'Bene, bene!' at the end of the four warlike stanzas : '*Avanti, Savoia!*' When I had finished reading she told me that the ode had truly affected her and that she was very grateful. Then, as I said, she talked of many things with her usual excellence of culture and taste. . . . At the end she shook my hand warmly, saying with effusion, 'I am most grateful to you.' Giacosa goes about telling of this reception and how the Queen shed big tears, and says, '*elle avait de quoi :* she ought to be proud of a poem like that, written by one like you; no queen or empress can expect as much.'"

Appreciation of this intelligent kind, especially on the part of a Queen, was soothing to a poet who suffered sorely from the well-meant patronage of the ignorant and vulgar and the inconsiderate demands

upon his time made by unknown correspondents. His woes of this kind were amusingly but vigorously set forth in an article entitled *Sfogo* which appeared in a newspaper. In it Carducci stated once and for all that he had his living to earn and could not afford to engage in correspondence with all and sundry, especially with boys and girls who imagined they were poets and requested him to get their verses printed. He also stated, not for the first time, his absolute refusal to write poetry for special souvenir publications, to make speeches to order, to write epigraphs or criticize futilities. Those, however, who tried his patience too far had reason to repent it. He was capable of scarifying idiots with letters like the following :—

" By the tone of your letters I had believed you were joking ; and had already excused the joke . . . but you insist. Know then that I am neither editor, preface-writer or puffer of verses. And what verses ! Your scribblings are foolishness and ignorance, simply bestial (*quadratamente bestiali*). If you want them back come or send. I have had enough trouble in reading your letters and answering in this one."

VIII

Carducci was now at the last stage of his career. The steeps of art were surmounted, the Garibaldian banner planted on their summit, and during the last seventeen years of his life rosy mists of praise and reverence were to irradiate, with ever-growing intensity, his patriarchal figure. The days of combat and controversy were practically over, and it is fitting, therefore, to look back on certain feats of arms which in the preceding pages have been passed over with the barest mention. Carducci's satirical and polemical writings, especially in prose, deserve consideration both for their interest and their high artistic merit. The poems in which Carducci wound the horn of literary satire do not reach his highest standard: the *Prologo* and the *Sonetti caudati* of the *Juvenilia* are tedious, *A Certi Censori* and *A un Heiniano d' Italia* are made ineffective by mere ill-

temper, and only the *Intermezzo*, though very obscure in parts and disfigured by some unnecessary brutality of phrase, has both humour and beauty. The poet tilts in it at his literary bugbears with an entertaining vigour, and here his borrowings from Heine's armoury are not at all out of place ; like Heine he assails his adversaries with grotesque similes which he ever and anon illuminates by passages of rare poetic beauty. It must be said that M. Jeanroy, who analyses the poem most ably, is rather unjust in his general estimate. He condemns it both as obscure and ineffective, but so harsh a judgment is critically unjustifiable.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Carducci found prose a more suitable field for his literary skirmishes. The three books of the *Confessioni e Battaglie*, much of which is incorporated in the volume of selected prose, are indispensable to the study of Carducci as clues to his character, evidence of his artistic opinions and commentaries on his poetry. Chiarini sums up their effect admirably when he says :—

" Somebody has compared these writings to resounding and glittering squadrons of

cavalry scattering everything that comes in their way; and the comparison is just. I do not mean by this that the writer did not sometimes go beyond the mark; indeed, I explicitly affirm that he did so more than once: but the spectacle of that proud gallantry, that resoluteness, is arresting and enchanting."

The dash and glitter of the style, the sly humour lurking in unexpected places, the honesty of purpose, the trenchancy of phrase, the frank revelation of a strong personality and the consistency with which the author, as a true knight-errant of art, challenges all who deny his own noble conception of poetry and vindicates triumphantly the dignity of letters are qualities in these fascinating works which would have placed Carducci, had he written in English, high among our most brilliant essayists.

The least satisfactory part of the controversial writings is that in which, either on his own behalf or that of others, he attacks contemporary critics. Usually his exasperation was justified, but his furious thumpings of Rapisardi, Guerzoni and Zendrini have

a lamentable want of dignity, and the impression produced is akin to that of the interminable conflicts of frenzied knights against giants and monsters in Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*. Something, of course, must be allowed for the Italian appreciation of slashing combats with pen and ink, but it is undeniable that in passages of the *Polemiche Sataniche*, *Moderatucoli*, *Critica e Arte*, *Rapisardiana* and *Ça Ira* Carducci abandons the magnanimous defence of literary ideals for the pursuit of personal vengeance. The sight of this paladin so deftly handling his Durindana may once have been inspiriting, but at the present it is well that these animosities should be passed over.

There is far more pleasure, at any rate, to be derived from the personal reminiscences set down in chiefly certain prefaces with all Carducci's "schiettezza e forza." The fascinating recollection of his boyhood which opens the essay upon Manzoni has already been noticed; in *Raccoglimenti* and *Juvenilia* he enlarges upon the conditions and moods which influenced his early poems, and *Le Risorse di San Miniato*,

though it could not have been written but for Heine's *Reisebilder*, is a delicious fantasia upon the poet's one year of irresponsible gaiety. Carducci always professed to loathe the *descrittore* who, having nothing else to say, made inventories of scenery or of his own psychological phenomena. Yet when he himself used description as an artistic device he showed astonishing power. In the long defence of his sonnet-sequence *Ça Ira*, which is unnecessarily elaborate, he twice breaks the argument to indulge in merely picturesque excursions, to evoke in one chapter the scenery of the Tuscan Val d' Arno and in another the Lake of Garda looking towards Sirmione, ending the latter digression with an apostrophe to the washerwomen on the shore in a playful spirit of Heinesque irony. As a description, too, the article upon the second centenary of Muratori the historian is both forcible and entertaining. It mocked the stupidity and ugliness of these official celebrations, and amusingly compared the beauty of Muratori's birthplace, Vignola, with the hideousness of the assembly's clothes and the dulness of the prefect's

speeches. The opportunity had been taken to combine a local agricultural show with the commemoration: of this Carducci warmly approved. There were "stupendous cabbages" and "very promising" hams. "It was an excellent idea," he wrote :—

". . . up to now Italy has been too intoxicated with idealism: to me a fair and well-grown cabbage is a much more æsthetic thing than five hundred cantos of modern poetry and a thousand articles even of the opposition Press."

The state of culture and literary taste in Italy was the subject in which Carducci's critical and controversial writings inevitably ended, and though he was himself biassed and often extremely unjust, they are documents of exceptional interest for the literary and social history of the time, besides exhibiting very clearly his own ideals and prejudices. While optimistic about the future, he took a gloomy view of the present. Again and again, from his very early article *Alcuni Condizioni della presente Litteratura* to the introduction to a translation of Shelley's *Prometheus Un-*

bound, published in 1898, he holds up his hands in sorrow and anger over the poverty of general culture, the acquiescence in mediocrity and the lowness of æsthetic standard which characterized the state of Italy during his lifetime. In the preface to *Levia Gravia*, in *Critica e Arte* and *Ça Ira*, in the articles on Manzoni, Prati and Leopardi, he repeatedly castigates his "generazioncelluccia di stoppa" for its blindness to the classically great, its love of the romantically feeble, its ignorance both of its own and European literature, and its chauvinistic pretentiousness. Carducci's strictures were very largely justified. Italy's struggle for freedom and the labour of regeneration exhausted her energies. In the political enthusiasm art sank to a low ebb, and after Leopardi and Manzoni, Carducci himself is the only great figure in Italian literature till the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Education undoubtedly was defective, as it still is; party feeling obscured æsthetic judgment, and the incisive portraits of typical critics in *Critica e Arte* were not much exaggerated.

Where Carducci himself went astray was

in not giving sufficient credit to the underlying sincerity of the great national struggle. In his view even this was vilely conducted by Italian statesmen, and his violent enmity to the Church and the Moderate party, historically unjustifiable in itself, caused him to include in his execration the literature which was generally popular with them. His enthusiasm for classic poetry, the poetry of youth and joy, made him regard the modern world as an old and decaying harridan, covering her wrinkles with meretricious cosmetics, and he compendiously described all the symptoms of decay which he observed by the one word "romanticism." The allusions in such poems as *Classicismo e Romanticismo* or *Autunno Romantico* can only be properly appreciated by understanding that to Carducci romanticism was a deadly disease, though in spite of many attempts—in the articles on Manzoni, Prati and Leopardi, in the review *Dieci Anni a Dietro* and elsewhere—he never succeeded in defining the exact connotation of that name. He identified it with neo-guelfism, the result in Italy of that tendency in European

romanticism which led towards a revival of the old, simple faith in Christianity, Christian optimism and Christian resignation. Neo-guelfism being for him a fatal obstruction to Italy's aspirations, Manzoni, its great literary exponent, also came under his ban. Manzoni was the greatest of the Italian romantics, and Carducci, though he somewhat grudgingly acknowledged Manzoni's merits as a poet and novelist, regarded him as the master of all evil, the source, that is, of the romantic influence. In his political enthusiasm for Italian liberty and his artistic veneration for Leopardi and Foscolo, Carducci made romanticism the scapegoat of all his exasperations, without stopping to reflect how far he was being led away from his original bugbear, neo-guelfism. Romanticism, the evil thing, was responsible for shifty moderate politics, for the disgrace of Mentana, for the power of Pio Nono, for the low state of education and the fondness for Dumas' novels, for Prati's facile sentimentalism, for Zanella's pious rationalism, for the bad criticism of Guerzoni and Zendrini, for the languors of De Amicis, for

the sensational crudities of Guerrini and Praga. Romanticism, he held, cut off the soul from real life, drugged it with an unhealthy idealism and left it a prey to every malady. Recording indignantly how a young Florentine asked him whether Dante was not a decadent, he exclaims :—"To me you all appear degenerates."

The world was old, and the age of poetry long past : this was the burden of Carducci's complaint, and he besought his countrymen to write no more poetry, but to labour for their country's economic, social and literary rejuvenation. He was convinced that the Italians were not a poetic nation, calling them "practical, positivist and Machiavellian," and asserting that their only natural artistic aptitude was for music. This feeling did not prevent him from composing poetry himself, but led him indignantly to proclaim the poet's independence of popular patronage and his unassailable right to compose what poetry and vent what opinions he pleased. The modern poet seemed to him a man born out of his age, a kind of Rip van Winkle,

who owed no allegiance to the uncomprehending world around him. Yet he pointed out to the world, adapting Heine's words, that it could not get away from poetry even if it had killed the art of poetry, but was bound to it like the prudent Sancho Panza to Don Quixote, ever impelled to follow the crazy knight in all his perilous enterprises. Shopkeepers, he said, may banish Homer and Dante from the schools, and Leopardi and Alfieri from the libraries : but the shopkeeper's daughter will re-enact the tragedy of Leopardi's *Amore e Morte* by swallowing arsenic, and the father, having saved her life, will give her to her lover, while the sons will certainly leave the shop to answer a Garibaldi's call to arms in the service of liberty, revolution and a country's honour, fulfilling the very dreams of Alfieri and Schiller.

This summary of Carducci's controversial prose is brief and imperfect, but it is an attempt to sketch the main outlines. Personal animosity, political passion and an insufficient power of critical analysis are its main faults, but these are far out-

weighed by the brilliance of its style, its trenchant humour, its lofty conception of life and literature, and the stamp which it bears of a noble personality whose devotion was unswerving to all that is fair and of good report.

IX

It was obvious that after his meetings with the Queen and the ode *Il Liuto e la Lira*, Carducci could no longer be considered a republican. In fact, in defending the sonnets of *Ça Ira* against the charge of being a demagogic manifesto, he had already definitely stated his opinion that a republic would not suit Italy. Carducci's political opinions had for many years been gradually veering towards monarchism. He saw that the King and Queen were popular with their people, while the old republican party was weakened by the rise of the socialists, for whom he had no sympathy; and whereas he had been violently opposed to Depretis, he admired both the personality and political ideals of Crispi. His public declaration of adherence to the monarchy was made in July, 1890, when he published *Piemonte*, the first of those massive historical odes which are the chief monuments of his last period. It

was an encomium of Charles Albert of Savoy, whom he called the "Italian Hamlet." In December of the same year he was nominated a member of the Senate. It is needless to say that the republicans were much incensed at this defection. They were not better pleased when in March, 1891, the poet consented to become patron of the banner embroidered by the ladies of Bologna for the monarchical club of the University, nor were they soothed by the words of Carducci's considered explanation :—

"I, by education and customs a republican (of the ancient type), by a continual development of historical and political comparison, felt myself attracted once more and converted, honestly and sincerely, to the monarchy, with which alone, as I now firmly believe, can Italy maintain herself united and strong : besides which I profess myself affectionately devoted to the great civic qualities and the humanity of Umberto I."

On March 11, accordingly, five hundred radical students of Bologna made a hostile demonstration when Carducci appeared to lecture. The uproar of hisses and insults

made lecturing impossible, but he calmly lighted a cigar and mounted on to the table to expose himself more openly to the demonstrators. Other professors arrived and attempted to disperse the rioters, but their efforts were futile; yet Carducci firmly refused to leave the room until everyone else had gone. Finally the crowd departed, and Carducci drove home, accompanied by plaudits and insults from opposing parties. He treated the affair as of very little moment, and, a fortnight later, resumed his lectures in peace. In the same year he composed two further odes, *La Bicocca di San Giacomo* and *La Guerra;* in 1892, *Cadore;* in 1895 *Alla Citta di Ferrara;* and in 1897 *La Chiesa di Polenta*, all of which, with the exception of *La Guerra*, find an inevitable place in any Carduccian anthology. In 1892 appeared his great work on the *Giorno* of Parini, and in the same year he began the complete commentary upon Petrarch's *Rime* with his beloved friend and former pupil, Severino Ferrari. In 1894 he delivered his magnificent oration upon the " Perpetual Liberty of the Republic of San Marino," which is

another of his sweeping eagle-flights over the historic past.

The disgrace of the disturbances in 1891 was wiped out when the thirty-fifth year of Carducci's professorship was celebrated with general enthusiasm by the city and University of Bologna in 1895. At a reception held in his honour he was presented with the freedom of the city and a gold medal. An address was also presented to him by the Deputazione di Storia Patria of which he was president, and the students on their own account gave him an album containing photographs of all his pupils from 1860 onwards. His speech to the students contained a summary of his own aims which is an admirable expression of his life and personality :—

"It has been my wish always to inspire myself and lift you up to the attainment of this ideal—to shed the old garments of an outworn state of society, and to prefer being to seeming, duty to pleasure ; to aim high in art, I say ; at simplicity rather than artifice, at grace rather than mannerism, at vigour rather than display, at truth and justice rather than glory."

In 1898 Carducci was made president of the Committee nominated to supervise the publication of Leopardi's *Pensieri* from the manuscripts left by him to Ranieri. He published at the same time two articles on Leopardi, delivered a course of lectures on his poetry, and pronounced a short oration upon the unveiling of his bust at Recanati. The end of the year was saddened for him by the death of his son-in-law, Carlo Bevilacqua, who was married to his eldest daughter. He hastened to Leghorn, and brought back his daughter and grandsons to live with him in Bologna. Carducci's poetry has been criticized for its coldness and want of deep human feeling. It is an unsympathetic judgment, and, so far as it reflects on Carducci's personality, quite untenable in the face of the touching letter to his widowed Beatrice :—

" My arms are open to you : come and let us weep for our dear Carlo. Who could have foretold this most bitter bereavement eighteen years ago when I gave you to him as wife ? Who could have said that I was destined to mourn his death while still in his prime ? . . .

Oh, it is an irreparable loss, a very bitter, bitter misfortune! Let us weep, for every comfort is vain. My dear daughter, your father's arms are open to you, and always will be, as a refuge in mourning if not as a consolation. And your sons shall be my sons. That is all I can say to you. . . ."

In 1899 appeared Carducci's last volume of poetry, *Rime e Ritmi*. It contained all the compositions of the preceding ten years, some in rhyme, others in "barbarian" metres, including the ballad on Jauffré Rudel, the irredentist lines to the daughter of Francesco Crispi, the polished sonnets on Nicola Pisano and Goldoni, the elegiacs *Alle Valchirie* on the Empress Elizabeth's death, the *Esequie della Guida* and other short Alpine idylls, and the great patriotic odes from *Piemonte* onwards. The hand of a master is evident in them all: there are no exceptions to the consistently high artistic level, and throughout there is perfect command of form and language, dignity, eloquence, serenity and grace. The historical odes far surpass all the rest in importance: they have already been the subject of exhaustive commentary, and as

great national poetry by an inspired poet they will long be learned in Italian schools. Nevertheless, it is impossible not to concur with the view of Professor Croce, M. Jeanroy and other critics that, for all their grandeur, something is wanting in these monumental odes. The ancient glow had faded away with advancing years, and eloquent erudition inadequately filled its place. It was not that Carducci ceased to be an artist or concealed emptiness of thought with pomp of language: never was he more in earnest, never did he more deeply thrill in contemplation of the past. But too often he enumerates the causes of his emotion, without communicating the emotion itself. Here and there the old spirit flashes out with sudden vividness, but these intermittent gleams only accentuate the coldness of the rest. *Piemonte*, for instance, with its opening catalogue of chief towns, is only saved by the picture of Carlo Alberto on the battlefield of Goito, as the sonorities of *Cadore* by the stirring description of Pietro Calvi's heroism, and the rather dreary progress through the ages of *La Chiesa di Polenta* by the pure

beauty of its last stanzas, which bring up, no less consummately than Gray's *Elegy*, the vision of a peaceful countryside at sunset, its stillness only broken by the tinkling of the Angelus. The composition of this last poem caused considerable excitement in 1897, as it seemed to indicate Carducci's reconcilement with religion ; but though his bitter hostility of other days had died down, it is clear that in tenderly evoking the spirit of reverence pervading such a scene only its pictorial qualities were really present to his mind—a fact which he made explicit with some abruptness in his telegram to the *Secolo*, saying :—

" Io sono qual fui nel 1867 ; e tale aspetto immutato e imperturbato la grande ora."[1]

Carducci remained as he was, the pagan worshipper of the gods of Greece. In the last poem of *Rime e Ritmi* called *Presso Una Certosa*, with its beautiful and intricate metre, he utters his prayer in the face of approaching death. The leaves of the acacias are red and yellow, a silvery mist

[1] " I am what I was in 1867 : and as such I await unchanged and undisturbed the great last hour."

veils the brook, the cypresses whisper in the cemetery: suddenly a gleam of sunlight cheers the mournful presage of winter:—

Improviso rompe il sole sopra l' umido mattino,
Navigando tra le bianche nubi l'aere azzurrino:
Si rallegra il bosco austero
Già del verno presago.

A me, prima che l' inverno stringa pur l' anima mia
Il tuo riso, O sacra luce, O divina poesia!
Il tuo canto, O padre Omero,
Pria che l' ombra avvolgami![1]

Meanwhile, in calm anticipation, the poet grown old regretfully lays down his lyre with the plaintive brevity of the *Congedo*:—

Fior tricolore,
Tramontano le stelle in mezzo al mare
E si spengono i canti entro il mio core.[2]

The excessive intellectual strain which Carducci imposed upon himself — even

[1] "Of a sudden the sun breaks over the watery morning, sailing through the pale blue sky amid the white clouds: already foreboding winter, the solemn wood rejoices. To me, ere winter presses on my heart, thy smile, oh holy light, oh poetry divine! To me thy song, oh father Homer, before the shade enfolds me!"

[2] "Three-coloured flower, the stars set in the midst of the sea, and the songs are quenched within my heart."

during his Alpine holidays he worked eight hours a day — now began to exact its penalty. In the autumn of 1899 a more serious attack of cerebral congestion paralysed his right arm. Though he recovered under medical treatment, he never entirely regained the use of his hand. After convalescence he was again hard at work upon a preface to a new edition of Muratori's *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores* and upon editing, with an introductory memoir, the literary remains of the journalist, Alberto Mario, which works were published in 1900 and 1901 respectively. In the following four years he continued to write learned studies on the sonnets and odes of Parini and the *canzoni* of Dante. In 1901 it was proposed to celebrate with a second "jubilee" his fortieth year as professor, and though he expressly declined the honour on the ground of his indisposition for festivities, the students assembled in the Liceo Musicale to hear a discourse by Giuseppe Picciola. In the following year Queen Margherita bought his fine library, leaving its use to him for the remainder of his life, and it was presented to the nation, to-

gether with his house, which she bought after his death, as a memorial of the poet. In 1904 Carducci, who had been assisted for the last few years by Severino Ferrari—thus realizing one of his most eager desires—was forced by infirmity to resign his professorship entirely, and he was awarded a pension of 12,000 lire. To his bitter sorrow the old *maestro* was unable to hand on his work to the man whom he regarded with all a father's love. Ferrari's health had already broken down: he gradually lost his reason, and in 1905, after a short illness in an asylum, he died. Carducci never recovered from the shock. He lived to receive the Nobel Prize for literature at the hands of a special deputation in 1906, and, after a few more painful months, died on February 16, 1907.

X

All Italy mourned the death of the great and venerable poet, and in the years that have since elapsed she has seen an enormous bibliography grow up round his work and personality, though its importance is not in direct ratio to its quantity. The Italian proclivity, severely ridiculed by Carducci, for pronouncing memorial discourses to the memory of the illustrious dead on all possible occasions has been fully indulged, the smallest scraps of reminiscence have been gathered in the papers, while a *saggio di fonti Carducciane* is still welcomed in the literary magazines. Yet the products of posthumous adulation and curiosity are no truer guide to the correct estimate of a poet than the criticism which assailed him in his life. It is, perhaps, too early to predict with certitude the place which Carducci will hold in European and in Italian literature; some estimates are too

high, those of a few, chiefly among a younger literary generation, are too low: but at least it is possible to form a tentative judgment from the work and life of Carducci himself and from the few really valuable studies that have been written by others. A poet's place in art has nothing to do with his civic virtues or with the temporary historic value of his services: a Shelley lords it over a Matthew Arnold. Nevertheless, in summing up Carducci, this historic value must in fairness be touched on. It was no small thing for Italy that at the time of her second regeneration a poet should have arisen so loftily inspired by her history. The time was ripe for a Carducci, and he came. Much of his poetry will die as certainly as the memory of the strife that prompted it, but its value in stirring patriotic hearts cannot be denied it. But Carducci did not only focus in his verse all the poetic elements of the time: for more than forty years he laboured as a teacher to imbue the youth of Italy with his own high artistic ideals and his own devotion to all that was best in their country's literature; as a scholar

he made many works accessible for the first time in an accurate and authoritative text; as a critic he carried on an indefatigable campaign on behalf of enlightened literary taste and purity of form. His influence upon the later literary generation is admitted, even by opponents, to have been enormous. All the most brilliant young minds of Italy flocked to his lectures and thrilled to his poetry. The scholars, the teachers and the poets of the age now growing old in its turn owed a debt to Carducci that is incalculable: from him they learned to appreciate, not only Italian literature, but the dignity of conscientious study and the futility of empty rhetoric. "Enter the libraries and archives of Italy, so diligently searched by foreigners," he cried.

"You will learn by experience how healthy and full of visions, like the atmosphere and holy thrill of ancient forests, are that air and that solitude to one who visits them with the pure desire for knowledge, with love for the name of the fatherland, with the consciousness of the immanent life of the human race you will learn how study in silence, pursued

with the quiet labour of every day, with the fruitful patience of him who knows how to wait, with the serenity of him who sees science and truth at the end of every research, invigorates, relieves, and improves the intellect and the mind."

Carducci was by no means impeccable. He was often unjust in criticism through a naturally umbrageous character, through Garibaldian bias, or through his inaptitude for minute critical analysis : but such imperfections can be forgotten in remembering that, at a time when literature in Italy was threatened with swift debasement, he stemmed the tide with his vigorous personality, directing all his erudition, his artistic power and his brilliant style not to the satisfaction of personal vanity, but to the encouragement of art and the refinement of taste.

The appraisement of Carducci's poetry is purely a matter of artistic perception. He founded no school. The generation of Pascoli and D'Annunzio soon left the rather shadeless glitter of his paganism and the pomp of his historic pictures ; and

critics, some calmly, others with exaggeration, have pointed out the limits of his genius—that he ignored the elementary inspirations of the lyrist, such as passion and pain, that there is artificiality in the erudition of his later odes, that his work was often below the highest standard, and that it is wanting in the universality of the world's immortal poetry. There is a great measure of truth in such criticism. In Carducci's eyes all the psychological heritage of modern civilization, from Rousseau onwards, was but a tasteless decoration obscuring the pure classic grace of poetry's temple. He took the form of his art from the great masters of Italian poetry, but the form of his thought, though strictly conditioned by the circumstances of his time, came from Horace and Virgil, from Homer and the Greek tragedians. Acting on his poetic theory "Sol nel passato è il bello," he consciously broke from the development of European thought, and urged by this very antagonism and by his irridentist nationalism he reflected, as a rule, not the universe, not all mortality, but the particular state of a particular nation.

A poet reaches universality in two chief ways: either by delineating with convincing purity of line the passions of humanity, or by rising from a particular feeling to an all-embracing conception of ultimate truth. Heine and Catullus were universal in the one way, Dante in the other, Shakespeare in both, but Carducci seldom in either. His antipathy to romantic egotism barred to him the first way, his hatred for mysticism the second. Yet it seems impossible to answer the question whether Carducci was a true poet who wrote beautiful poetry or not except with an emphatic affirmative. If Carducci had been an exile, wandering and persecuted, if a great passion of the heart had been his, if religion had stirred his soul, he would have written differently, more humanly, with more ecstasy; yet, after all, bitterness of bereavement could wring no more poignant cry from the heart than *Pianto Antico*, while *Canto di Marzo*, *Visione* or *Notte di Maggio* for pure musical richness can compare triumphantly with the harmonies of any more emotional lyrist. Moreover, if Carducci abstracts from the more primitive passions, there

are other emotions—of pity, of patriotism, of reverence, of simple joy in the beauty of life—on which he soars to a universality, neither pathetic nor philosophic, but plastic —the universality of the Parthenon or the Winged Victory. It is to such noble monuments that Carducci's genius may best be compared; when he wrote :—

> O Paro, O Grecia, antichità serena,
> Datemi i marmi e i carmi,[1]

he gave the clue to his poetry's real affinity. At its highest his verse is less akin to music or painting than to the art of sculpture; it has the same limitations, aims at the same effects, reaches the same calm perfection. All temperaments are not equally responsive to the divinity of marmoreal beauty, and for them Carducci may seem lifeless and hard: but others who penetrate beneath chiselled outlines to the ever-living mystery of sculptural form can never fail to recognize in the poet of the *Odi Barbare* a master of the highest order.

[1] "Oh Paros, Oh Greece, serene antiquity, give me your marbles and your songs."

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